



CONTACT:
Bill O'Melia
303-358-7420
bomelia@drennensdreams.org

Jennifer Darling
303-918-5203
jenroedarling@hotmail.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May is National Water Safety Month – Remember Drowning is Preventable!

Drennen's Dreams Foundation Reminds Parents and Lifeguards to Stay Vigilant at Pools

Denver, CO – (May 10, 2016) – As sunny warm weather approaches, many families turn their attention to pool time and water fun. Drennen's Dreams Foundation would like to remind everyone that May is National Water Safety Month and drowning can occur at anytime, anywhere, at any age. Yet drowning is preventable. Let's not let one more child die this summer.

Did you know that over the ten year span of 2005-2014 there were an average of 3,536 unintentional drowning deaths each year in the United States? That equals approximately ten deaths each day. And one in five of those drowning deaths are children ages 14 and younger. Nationwide, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths among children ages 14 and under. As our local media reminds us, kids and teens can drown in any open body of water – including pools, rivers and reservoirs. Stay vigilant.

May kicks off national Water Safety Month so this is the perfect time to remind Coloradoans about the measures they can take to help prevent the preventable during the summer months ahead. This is particularly important as Colorado sadly loses many children and adults to preventable drownings each year.

"While I miss my beautiful boy every single day, I know that the work we are doing is making a difference. I will keep saying NOT ONE MORE, until I don't have to say it again," said Melissa O'Melia, mother of Drennen. "Even just one drowning is too many, and National Water Safety Month gives all of us a reason to remind each other to stay safe this swim season."

During National Water Safety Month, Drennen's Dreams will be actively reminding lifeguards and parents to stay vigilant and promote safety in our pools and water. All of us need to be watchful – you never know if today is the day a swimmer needs your help.

Four steps parents can take to prevent drownings:

- **Teach swimming and lifesaving skills** – Make sure children know how to swim, float, tread water and get in and out of the water safely. Be prepared for emergencies through life-saving training and remember water safety is key near streams and rivers as well. Ensure children wear life jackets at all times in open water while boating, paddle boarding, tubing and swimming in our Colorado rivers and reservoirs.
- **Be a lifeguard even when lifeguards are on duty** - 19% of drowning deaths involving children occur in public pools with certified lifeguards present. Make sure at least one adult is watching children in the pool at all times. Maintain constant visual contact with children and do not allow distractions to take your attention away from the pool. Avoid alcohol or using your phone when supervising children.
- **Watch older experienced swimmers as well as young children** - Children under five and adolescents between the ages of 15-24 have the highest drowning rates. Don't just watch the kiddie pool.
- **Install barriers** – Backyard pools should be fenced on all sides with four-to-five foot high fences. Gates should be self-latching and locking. Spas and hot tubs should be covered and locked when not in use.

Through speaking engagements across the Front Range and throughout the United States, Bill O'Melia, Drennen's father, has been able to share Drennen's story with thousands of lifeguards. His goal, and the goal of Drennen's Dreams Foundation, is to help lifeguards understand the weight of their responsibility as "lifesavers." Drennen's Dreams Foundation welcomes invitations from parks and recreation departments, aquatics facilities and neighborhood pools to come speak and promote this important message. We aspire to work with everyone to help lifeguards understand what is truly at stake while on duty so that, ultimately, no additional lives are lost to tragic drownings.

To learn more about how to keep swimmers safe or to invite Bill O'Melia to speak at your pool or lifeguard training, visit drennensdreams.org for more information.

About Drennen's Dreams Foundation:

On June 5, 2010 Drennen O'Melia opened his seventh competitive swim season by swimming the anchor leg on two winning relay teams and qualifying for All-Stars in his three individual events. The next day, June 6, Drennen drowned in four feet of water despite the presence of lifeguards. Following that tragic day, the Drennen's Dreams Foundation was created to focus on making guarded pools safer for patrons, especially children. Through partnerships with other like-minded organizations such as Families United to Prevent Drowning, American Red Cross and others, the Drennen's Dreams Foundation's intent is to ensure that no more preventable deaths occur due to insufficient training of lifeguards, mismanagement of pool facilities, and lack of necessary monitoring and medical equipment. The Foundation shares Drennen's story with lifeguards, pool managers, and others to inspire their vigilance while on the job. Join us on Sunday, June 5 for our annual Splash Dash 5K run/walk event to support this important cause. Find out more about Drennen's Dreams at drennensdreams.org and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).